

California State Parks Hosts 2011 Whale Festival At MacKerricher State Park

FORT BRAGG, Calif. – 2011 Whale Festival activities are planned at MacKerricher State March on March 18, 19 and 20.

An ideal location for watching migrating whales, MacKerricher provides a wheelchair accessible boardwalk, allowing an easy traverse across the headlands to a deck situated on Laguna Point near the whale route. Docents will present public whale talks on the dates below, and will provide binoculars and a spotting scope to help visitors study whales and other fascinating marine and bird wildlife near MacKerricher's shores. A rare, reconstructed Gray Whale Skeleton is on permanent display near the visitor center and Entry Kiosk. The skeleton is a composite of two whales that beached on the Mendocino Coast, two years apart. Humpback Whale bones are also on display giving a visual size perspective between the grays and humpbacks.

Schedule of Events at MacKerricher State Park

Friday, March 18: 7 p.m.

Close Encounters of the Marine Mammal Kind - Stories of personal encounters with marine mammals, including whales, told by people who experienced them. The public is invited to attend and share their stories of marine mammal encounters. Meet at the MacKerricher Visitor Center, near the entry kiosk and Whale Skeleton.

Saturday, March 19 and 20: 11 a.m.

Whale Walks –Docents present an informative overview of whales. The talk/walk starts at the MacKerricher Visitor Center and then proceeds to the whale skeleton before driving to Laguna Point for whale watching.

Saturday, March 19: 12:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Whale Fact Scavenger Hunt for children.

At MacKerricher State Park start out at the visitor center and then go through the park to find clues. Answer questions about gray whales. Then get a prize.

Saturday, March 19: 12:30 to 3:00 p.m.

Whale Arts and Crafts for Children. Make your own gray whales and color them as you like.

Sunday, March 20, 1:00 p.m. to 3p.m.

Help us paint the whale skeletons at MacKerricher State Park.

Whale skeleton bones need to be painted to help protect them. Paint and some brushes will be provided. Bring paint brushes and wear old clothes. Rain or fog will cancel painting the whale skeleton.

For more information call (707) 961-0471.

About The Whales

The 2011 celebration is all about the migration of the Eastern Pacific Gray Whale from the protected lagoons of western Baja California to their ancestral feeding grounds in the cold waters of the Bering and Chukchi Seas. The migrating whales, numbering 18,000 – 23,000 individuals, pass by the Mendocino Coast twice each year. They head south between the months of December, January and February, and return north between the months of February and April. Gray whale calves weigh about 1,500 pound at birth. Mother gray whales' milk has 52 % fat content. A gray whale calf will gain between 60 and 70 pounds a day when nursing. A full grown gray weigh can way up to 45 tons, as much as a fully loaded tractor-trailer.